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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/03/2016  
TAGS: [IS](#) [KDEM](#) [LE](#) [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)  
SUBJECT: MGLE01: SPEAKER BERRI MEETS WITH CODEL DREIER;  
AGREES TO PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C/NF) In a July 3 meeting with Codel Dreier and the Ambassador, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri welcomed the delegation and agreed enthusiastically to future parliamentary exchanges. Regarding the national dialogue, Berri said that it was Lebanon's only chance to avoid confessional strife, and especially Sunni-Shia conflict. He said that July 25 will be the last session at which the dialogue will address Hizballah's arms. After July 25, future meetings will focus on implementing the decisions already reached at the national dialogue. End summary.

BERRI ENTHUSIASTIC  
ABOUT FUTURE EXCHANGES

2. (C/NF) On July 3, Codel Dreier, the Ambassador, and econoff met with Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri in Ayn el-Tinneh. Berri warmly greeted the delegation and welcomed the Codel's offer of parliamentary exchanges. He said that he had similar agreements with legislatures in France and other European countries, so it was time for one with the U.S. Congress, considering that some of its members are of Lebanese descent and that there are over one million Lebanese-Americans. Chairman Dreier, on behalf of the House Democracy Assistance Commission that he leads, said that the Commission sought to strengthen democracies like that of Lebanon. Dreier invited a Lebanese parliamentary delegation to visit Arkansas for a week as a guest of Codel member Representative Boozman, to be followed by a week in Washington. Berri immediately accepted on behalf of his colleagues in Parliament. Berri also welcomed Chairman Dreier's offer of books for the Lebanese parliamentary library.

FROM NATIONAL DIALOGUE  
TO IMPLEMENTATION

3. (C/NF) The delegation asked Berri about his views of the national dialogue set to resume on July 25. Berri replied that the dialogue is Lebanon's only chance for stability. He described the current situation as dangerous, "like before 1982." His top priority was avoiding a Sunni-Shia conflict. Berri considered the national dialogue a success on two counts: for getting enemies like Michel Aoun and Walid Jumblatt to sit together at a round table, for achieving results. Berri claimed the dialogue was a success on 10 of

the 12 subjects it took up. The one failure was the dialogue participants' inability to agree on replacing President Emile Lahoud. The other issue, Hizballah's arms, was still outstanding, pending the July 25 session. Berri expects to discuss the "resistance strategy" at the July 25 session.

¶4. (C/NF) Berri said any dialogue session after July 25 will focus on implementing the decisions already made. He explained that change in Lebanon will take time. The Lebanese have to "go back to school" to learn the basics of peaceful coexistence. (Note: Prior to Berri's meeting with the Codel, his foreign affairs adviser Ali Hamdan told econoff that July 25 will not be the last session of the national dialogue. Rather, it will be the last to discuss the issues on the table, including Hizballah's arms. There may well be more sessions with new issues. End note.)

COMMENT  
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¶5. (C/NF) Berri was cordial and in good humor. He only mentioned Israel and the plight of the Palestinians once before returning to the pzrliamentary exchange subjects at hand. End comment.

¶6. (U) Codel Dreier did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.  
FELTMAN